



FRENCH INDO-CHINA

CHAPTER I

ANNAMITE CIVILIZATION

"Jamais, a aucune époque de l'histoire, un peuple colonisateur n'a rencontré un aussi grand nombre de conditions favorables. Un pays riche et d'une infinie variété, un peuple déjà unifié, une administration régulière, des habitudes studieuses. ... De toutes les institutions annamites il n'en est pas une dont on ne puisse tirer parti." *P* Bernard*

THE HISTORY OF ANNAM

BEFORE their contact with the Chinese, the Annamites were but one of the many nomadic peoples of the Far East. Originally they probably came from Thibet, but only legends from this period have survived showing that the Annamites possessed a language of their own, along with assorted rites and superstitions. Since they were bounded on the east by the sea, and to the south and west by foreign peoples of like force and degree of civilization, conquest or cultural stimulus could only come from their neighbours to the

north.

The Annamites would never have left their nomadic life in the forest and high mountains to settle as farmers on the delta land, had it not been for China's physical and moral domination. It cost the Chinese a great military effort to tame and teach this vagrant people, and for the Annamites it was far more helpful than harmful to be subordinated to an infinitely more disciplined and cultured nation.

The Chinese invasions began about 213 B.C. This military period ended in A.D. 186, when the moral conquest of Annam, or the Pacified South, began. At the outset the Chinese followed no plan of colonization, but after the second century A.D. they used all their consummate art to assimilate this people whom they contemptuously called the Gko-chL. In four centuries of effective domination the Annamites forgot their own past and adopted Chinese civilization in the fullest sense.

In the seventh century, the southern fringe of Annamites was troubled by Cham invasions, and China, preoccupied with internal difficulties, did nothing to protect her vassal. The Annamites, however, proved to be by now such apt pupils that they not only drove back the

Chams—eventually
exterminating or forcing
them into the moun-